

March 4, 2021

Dear House Finance Committee Members,

Please pass the Nursing Home Safe Staffing and Quality Care Act (H5012).

I am here today because we need our General Assembly to pass the Nursing Home Staffing and Quality Care Act. We need to end the staffing crisis we face in our homes and we need to boost wages for frontline caregivers as soon as possible.

Working in the nursing home throughout COVID has been emotionally and mentally exhausting. There are days where I come home from work and cry because we can't give our residents what they need and I feel overwhelmed. It's also just traumatizing to work in a nursing home right now. It's a terrible feeling to walk past a resident's room and know they have passed away, or to see their bodies leaving our facility. It really wears on you.

The issues we've always had with staffing feel even more difficult during COVID. Our residents are isolated—they're lonely, they miss their families, and they've been in their rooms for 10 months. They want to get out, play checkers or dominoes, and have company. It feels terrible to feel like you're cutting corners—not having time to cut a resident's nails or spend 20 minutes talking with them—when you know they need that care and interaction the most. You can see it in our residents' faces—they get upset or lash out, and some of them are losing their appetites and eating less. You can tell that some of them just want to give up. And, it's hard on us as the CNAs, too. We are stretched so thin, and we are so overwhelmed.

We take on so much risk and responsibility— and now, during COVID, our residents' lives are literally in our hands. The hourly wages we earn are horrible and disgusting. I used to have to work two jobs to make ends meet, and it was exhausting. Caregivers deserve a proper, respectful wage. One job should be enough for us to support ourselves and our families.

We can't wait any longer; we need our legislators to pass the Nursing Home Staffing and Quality Care Act. Our residents deserve high-quality, compassionate care, and caregivers working on the frontlines of COVID deserve fair wages and respect.

Patricia Connolly, CAN from Warwick